

Dear Members of the Human Services Committee of Connecticut General Assembly:

My name is Evenin Milagros Lucas-Moran and I write to you as an undergraduate student at the University of Connecticut, as a member of the Connecticut Immigration and Refugee Coalition, but most importantly as the daughter of immigrants. As I'm sure you have noticed in the previous weeks the support and disapproval of bill SB284: in extending the age limit for income-eligible individuals to obtain medical assistance regardless of immigration status up to the age of 18 has caused quite the commotion all around the state. Some view it as the opportunity to improve these individuals' quality of life while others argue and raise concern over fiscal matters. For me, however, it is clear as day. The passing of this bill would not only allow for much needed medical assistance for these individuals but holds the opportunity to assure a better future for the generations to come. As these individuals continue to confront the shortcomings of our federal system, they learn the term of prioritization. In a state that is fueled by fiscal matters and product efficiency their health comes to the end of the list. With not enough income to afford doctor visits let alone adequate health care or treatment these individuals' health are left up to the mercy of fortune and luck. As they struggle to find their footing the question of medical assurance ceases to come to mind until it comes to their children or until they are met with extreme medical issues.

You may not see it every business day, but I do. I see it in my mother's concerned face every time I walk out the door. I see it in my neighbor, in my coworker, in my cousins, my friends, I see it everywhere. I saw my mom work 3 jobs for 10 years to support our family until she dropped to the ground from high blood pressure. I witnessed my neighbor try to comfort her inconsolable feverish son at home rather than take him to the hospital in fear of revealing their legal status, I watched my underage coworker burn his arm in hot oil and rather than go to the emergency room decide to finish the workday because he can't afford medical costs so why even bother. I see my cousin's parents scramble to find the money they don't have for their sons' yearly physicals and over the counter prescription drugs. I see the lives of these individuals pushed to the side living in the shadows, living invisible lives with real material struggles, who's lives could be transformed with the passing of this bill. One can only imagine the relief lifted from the shoulders of these parents holding Atlas attempting to give their children the life they never had despite being labeled foreigners in a supposed golden gate country.

In Spanish there's two commonly used phrases I'd like to share with you today. "Echale ganas" and "Para mi gente." The first one roughly translates to "keep working" or "keep trying" and the second one to "for my people." I stand here today to say that with or without the passing of this bill we will keep pushing forward to achieve the American Dream that was sold to our people in their home countries. As those who have gathered here, we stand not just for ourselves but for our people, for our families, for our neighbors, for those whose voices have been silenced by fear. We stand here today for everyone in need to say there is power in numbers and the fight for equity is far from over as we continue to advocate and raise awareness for not only the assurance of medical assistance for children but for all immigrants of any age, including parents and adults.

Thank you.